

Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan

The Twin Counties Region is a thriving crossroads of innovation where the broad talents and experiences of our many communities foster shared opportunities for educational achievement, economic success, healthy families, and welcoming neighborhoods.



TWIN COUNTIES VISIONING
FOR A BETTER LIFE

July 9, 2013



TWIN COUNTIES VISIONING FOR A BETTER LIFE

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Call to Action

On behalf of the Community Partners Coalition, we are very pleased to present the *Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan* (the *Strategic Plan*). The Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan process (TCSVP process) began in the fall of 2011, when Edgecombe County, Nash County and the City of Rocky Mount embarked upon an effort to create a shared vision and a prosperous future for all residents of the Twin Counties.

The *Strategic Plan* you are reading represents the hard work of many Twin Counties citizen leaders, including the 23 Community Partners Coalition members; the 11 Core Team local government staff members who supported the Coalition; over 90 community members who completed study circles facilitation training; over 360 study circle participants; and dozens of citizen leaders currently serving on one of eight Action Groups working to make the community's vision a reality. We are grateful to all who have given so generously of their time and talents to make this process possible.

Strategic planning is a continuous process of aligning our actions with our highest ideals and shared values. Once we take action, we must evaluate the outcomes and modify as needed to achieve our goals. As we attain our goals, we need to celebrate our success and establish new goals to move us toward our vision. This is how we build a better future one action at a time. So while this *Strategic Plan* is a significant accomplishment, our journey has just begun. We must now work together to implement the recommendations in this *Strategic Plan* and continue the work of building a better future for all residents of the Twin Counties.

In the Twin Counties, the quality of our lives and our economic futures are inseparably intertwined. Prosperity in our region will require more collaboration and coordination at all levels in our community; elected officials, government staff, businesses, civic organizations, churches and citizen leaders will all need to work together.

Through the TCVSP process, we have learned of the tremendous creativity, perseverance and pride of our Twin Counties community and our shared commitment to invest personally in a better future for ourselves, our children and our neighbors. This emerging citizen leadership and collaboration across jurisdictions provides an essential foundation for building a prosperous future together.



Creating Prosperous Communities Tomorrow Requires Responsible Planning Today.

Introduction

The Twin Counties Region has a rich, shared history as well as present-day economic and political ties that weave together residents of cities, towns and rural areas in a shared destiny. Our region is a special place to live, work and play, and we have many wonderful community assets upon which a vibrant and sustainable future can be built. Some of these assets, identified during conversations with project leadership, are highlighted in the box below.

However, the past 10 years have been difficult for our area. We suffered enormous devastation from flooding during Hurricane Floyd in September 1999. We have lost our textile manufacturing industries and tobacco production has declined significantly. Our inner-city neighborhoods show evidence of decline with many homes boarded up. In October 2009, Forbes magazine listed the Rocky Mount Metropolitan Statistical Area as one of the 10 most impoverished cities in America.

In response to these indicators, Edgecombe County, Nash County and the City of Rocky Mount are partnering through the TCVSP process to develop a broad-based vision and strategic plan for the future of the Twin Counties Region. In fall of 2011, each jurisdiction appointed representatives to the Community Partners Coalition to guide the TCVSP process. Each jurisdiction has also appointed staff members to serve on the Core Team that has provided ongoing coordination. This *Strategic Plan* summarizes the outcomes of this two-year process and provides a road map for collectively pursuing our shared regional vision.

Regional Assets

Location

- Proximity to multiple population centers and trade opportunities
- Proximity to major transportation infrastructure, including the intersection of I-64 and I-95

Sense of Place

- Small-town atmosphere and sense of community
- Cultural history and character
- Community resilience in the face of disaster (e.g., flooding)
- Valuable parks and rivers that enhance quality of life and tourism
- Existing historic preservation and green initiatives
- Strong local institutions and businesses

Strong Workforce Development Partners

- Turning Point Workforce Development Board
- Edgecombe and Nash Community Colleges

Strong local governments and economic development organizations

- Carolina Gateway Partnership and existing business incentives
- Existing base of industries and farms

Built Environment

- Walkable neighborhoods and downtowns
- Historic architecture
- Predeveloped industrial properties

Natural Resources

- Productive farmland
- Undeveloped and available land
- Tar River and natural open space

Project Overview

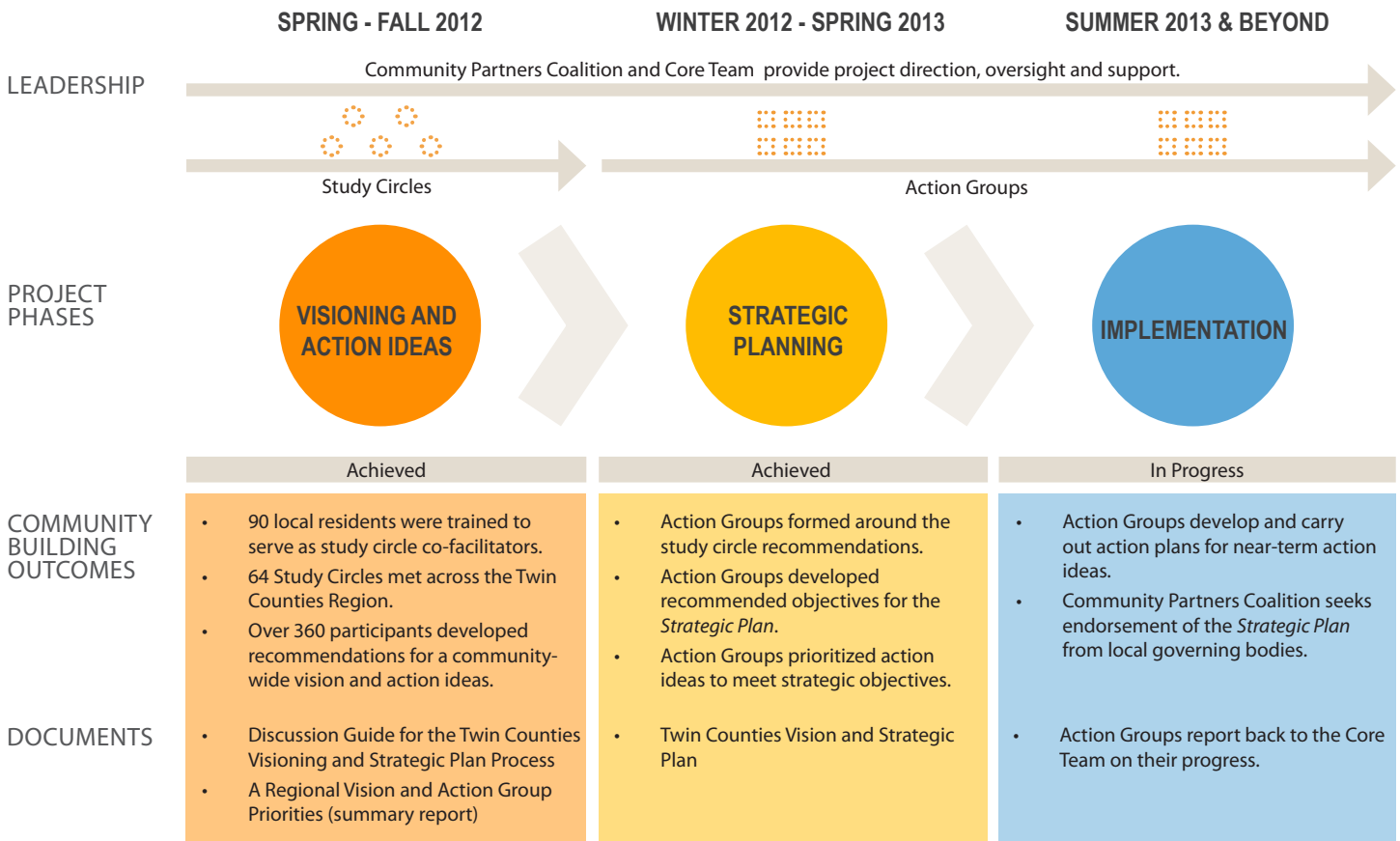
Edgecombe County, Nash County and the City of Rocky Mount are partnering to sponsor the TCVSP process. Launched in November 2011, this process is an opportunity for residents and community leaders to create a road map for a more sustainable and prosperous community.

The goals of the TCVSP process are to:

- Create a shared vision and strategic plan based on the collective quality of life goals that community members have for the region.
- Position the Twin Counties Region to succeed in a globally competitive economy.

The process diagram below illustrates key milestones and outcomes of the TCVSP process. The project began with an extensive study circle dialogue that engaged over 360 community members in identifying ideas for a regional vision and actions for achieving it. Based on this information, the Community Partners Coalition developed a regional vision and formed Action Groups to address the community's top priorities. Using the extensive feedback and recommendations submitted by the study circles, Action Groups formalized objectives and priority action items for inclusion in the *Strategic Plan*. Moving forward, Action Groups will shepherd implementation of the *Strategic Plan* in partnership with community members, local organizations and the staff and elected officials of the jurisdictions in the Twin Counties Region.

The best way to predict the future is to create it.
~ Peter Drucker



This process diagram illustrates key milestones and outcomes of the TCVSP process. For more information on the project and for copies of past reports, please visit the project website at <http://twincountiesvisioning.skeo.com/>.

*"The most successful reinventions ... involve groups of people - perhaps small groups at first - sharing a commitment to bringing disparate people together in ever-expanding networks, raising expectations, keeping an eye on the big picture, but focusing on small, attainable successes and relentlessly building on them ..."*¹

Project Leadership

Community Partners Coalition:

The Coalition has provided oversight and guidance over the course of the project and is composed of representatives appointed by the governing bodies of Edgecombe County, Nash County and the City of Rocky Mount.

Coalition Co-Chairs:

Each jurisdiction also appointed a Co-Chair to the Coalition. The three Co-Chairs have worked closely with the Core Team.

Action Group Chairs:

These leaders, some of whom also serve on the Coalition, are tasked with chairing the Action Groups and providing leadership for the strategic planning and implementation phases of the process.

Core Team:

The Core Team has provided technical expertise and support to the Coalition and to the Action Groups. The Core Team is composed of staff members representing Edgecombe County, Nash County and the City of Rocky Mount, the Carolina Gateways Partnership, the Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce, and the North Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations.

¹ "Voices from Forgotten Cities: Innovative Revitalization Coalitions in America's Older Small Cities" (MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, 2007).

Vision Statement and Goals

Based on input from over 360 participants, the Coalition developed the following regional vision statement and set of goals.

Twin Counties Vision

“The Twin Counties Region is a thriving crossroads of innovation where the broad talents and experiences of our many communities foster shared opportunities for educational achievement, economic success, healthy families, and welcoming neighborhoods.”

Regional Goals

The following regional goals form the basis for the eight Action Groups charged by the Community Partners Coalition with developing and shepherding implementation of this *Strategic Plan*. These goals are listed below in alphabetical order:

- **Align Regional Leadership.** The Twin Counties Region will align elected officials, local government staff, community-based organizations and citizen leaders around implementation of the *Strategic Plan*.
- **Crime Prevention and Safety.** The Twin Counties Region will invest in holistic crime prevention and safety initiatives that emphasize human development.
- **Food Economy.** The Twin Counties Region will support a robust, thriving local food economy that makes healthy food affordable and accessible to residents in each of our many communities and that grows the economy through support for local producers and businesses.
- **Health and Mental Health.** The Twin Counties Region will invest in improved health and mental health outcomes for the residents of all of our communities.
- **Job Creation and Talent Development.** The Twin Counties Region will improve regional economic performance by improving training opportunities, developing talent recruitment strategies, developing business-friendly communities with outstanding infrastructure, and devising targeted business recruitment strategies.
- **Positive Image.** The Twin Counties Region will promote a positive image of the area, internally and externally, by telling a new story that celebrates the assets and culture of the community, leverages the diverse array of present-day achievements, and articulates its aspirations for the future.
- **Quality of Life in Underserved Neighborhoods.** The Twin Counties Region will raise the quality of life in underserved communities by investing in the human, social, physical and economic capital of these communities and amplifying the efforts of existing community development programs and leaders.
- **STEP: Improving Educational Opportunities.** The Twin Counties Region will provide a high quality education system for all learners from cradle to career.

Action Groups

Overview

The Coalition agreed on October 5, 2012, to sponsor eight Action Groups based on the regional goals that surfaced through the study circles process. Each Action Group is responsible for determining a set of objectives that meet their group's goal, prioritizing action ideas based on those objectives and shepherding implementation of the action ideas they have prioritized.

In addition to the eight regional goals, the Coalition determined that the following cross-cutting themes, which were identified during the study circles process, should guide the work of each of the Action Groups:

- Retaining youth.
- Alleviation of poverty as well as regional and race-based disparities.
- Telling a new story about the Twin Counties Region.

The objectives and priority actions identified by each Action Group are outlined on the following pages of this section. It also provides case studies of related innovative and inspiring work taking place in other communities across the nation. Action Groups are responsible for developing action plans to implement each of their priority actions and for shepherding implementation of those plans in collaborations with a wide range of community partners.

"While each city approaches the revitalization puzzle quite differently, the pivotal pieces are the same from one context to the next. They are:

- (1) leadership,*
- (2) civic infrastructure,*
- (3) vision and plan,*
- (4) social inclusion,*
- (5) quality of life,*
- (6) access to opportunities,*
- (7) resource acquisition, and*
- (8) image and perception.*

*... In an environment of many challenges and limited resources, priorities must be set and investment targeted. A vision built with broad community input and consensus provides a framework for that difficult decision."*²

How Do I Get Involved? For more information on joining an Action Group or getting involved with implementation of the Strategic Plan, please contact one of the Administrators listed on page 2. For more information on the project and for copies of past reports, please visit the project website at <http://twincountiesvisioning.skeo.com/>.

² "Voices from Forgotten Cities: Innovative Revitalization Coalitions in America's Older Small Cities" (MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, 2007).

Action Group Plans

A. Align Regional Leadership

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will align elected officials, local government staff, community-based organizations and citizen-leaders around implementation of the Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan.

Objective 1.

Align elected officials and staff around the *Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan*.

- Action 1a. Seek endorsement of the *Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan* from each of the three jurisdictions' elected boards.
- Action 1b. Create an intergovernmental board that will identify opportunities for greater regional alignment and support implementation of Action Group initiatives.
- Action 1c. Make an intergovernmental "Core Team" a permanent entity with the goal of increasing staff level coordination among all local governments.
- Action 1d. Encourage elected officials to support and promote a regional identity and regional successes.

Objective 2.

Align economic development organizations, tourism boards and businesses around the *Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan*.

- Action 2a. Shepherd formation of a group to examine ways to collaborate and jointly market shared tourism assets.
- Action 2b. Provide briefings to businesses and the Chambers on the *Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan* in order to get their buy-in to the TCVSP process and to seek their support for specific TCSVP initiatives.

CASE STUDY: GROW Nebraska

This community success is relevant to goals A and E.

GROW Nebraska is a nonprofit organization "focused on creating sustainable economic development" by "supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses through promotion, access to markets and education." The organization was founded in 1995 in response to the marketing and training challenges faced by the state's rural entrepreneurs (40% of which are agricultural) spread across a vast geographic distance. The project began as a way to launch a craft cooperative that would provide marketing and training support. Nine years after it opened, gross sales of GROW members exceeded \$9 million. GROW Nebraska is currently the only program providing market entry and market access in the state. It has contributed to the creation of more than 2,200 jobs.

For more information:

https://www.kansascityfed.org/publicat/mse/MSE_6_06.pdf

http://www.growneb.com/about_grow_nebraska/about_grow_nebraska.php



B. Crime Prevention and Safety

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will invest in holistic crime prevention and safety initiatives that emphasize human development.

Objective 1.

Support strategic, early and integrated intervention and education programs for at-risk populations and their families to make criminal behavior a less viable option.

Action 1. Address gaps and overlaps in afterschool and leadership development services for at-risk youth, and develop a plan for better integrating existing services and filling the gaps where they exist.

Objective 2.

Support ex-offender reintegration into the community to reduce recidivism rates.

Action 2. Support the formation of a Reentry Committee.

C. Food Economy

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will support a robust, thriving local food economy that makes healthy food affordable and accessible to residents in each of our many communities and that grows the economy through support for local producers and businesses.

Objective 1.

Harness the region's spending on food to bolster the sustainability of small, local producers in support of economic development and job creation.

Action 1. Convene a Just Health and Food Summit.

Objective 2.

Increase access to and encourage consumption of fresh, healthy foods as a means of addressing obesity and chronic disease incidence rates.

Action 2. Develop a strategic plan to increase infrastructure for the local food economy.

Action 3. Recruit additional Hispanic members to the Food Economy Action Group.

CASE STUDY: Vermont Food Venture Center

This community success is relevant to goals C, D and E.

The Vermont Food Venture Center (VFVC) in Hardwick, Vermont, is a "shared-use kitchen incubator for value-added and specialty food producers," which offers fully equipped commercial kitchens (with dry and cold storage) for rent on an hourly or contract basis. The facilities accommodate hot processing, cold packing and baking. The VFVC also offers support with packaging and provides technical support to help value-added food businesses get off the ground. The VFVC is a project of the nonprofit Center for an Agricultural Economy, and it is a recent recipient of a Value-Added Producer Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Value-added agricultural commodities are widely recognized to be a critical – and often missing – component of a viable local food economy.

For more information: <http://vermontfoodventurecenter.org/>



D. Health and Mental Health

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will invest in improved health and mental health outcomes for the residents of all of our communities.

Objective 1. Educate residents of the Twin Counties Region about healthy lifestyles and promote policy and infrastructure initiatives that support healthy living.	Action 1. Prioritize the top health issues and address them through education campaigns.
Objective 2. Increase universal access to affordable health care.	Action 2. Coordinate and expand affordable health care services across the Twin Counties Region.
Objective 3. Develop a mental health system of care that is fully integrated with physical health care, oriented toward prevention and wellness (not just prevention of symptoms), and oriented toward the whole person.	Action 3. Coordinate and expand existing mental health services across the Twin Counties Region and raise awareness of mental health issues and resources among community leaders.



TOOLS: The Building American Cities Toolkit

This community success is relevant to goals B, E and G.

The Center for Community Progress was formed in 2010 to support the “reuse of vacant, abandoned, and problem properties in America’s cities and towns.” The organization serves as a national resource, research and advocacy organization for the revitalization of neighborhoods and communities impacted by vacant land. One key online resource, the Building American Cities Toolkit, catalogues tools used by cities nationwide to combat vacancy. The tools fall into four categories: (1) problem property owners, (2) building stronger neighborhoods, (3) reusing vacant properties, and (4) taking control and managing problem properties. Descriptions of each tool include information on how it works, when to use it, cautions about unintended consequences and case studies highlighting communities where the tool was used effectively.

For more information: <http://www.communityprogress.net/mission-pages-24.php>; <http://www.communityprogress.net/toolkit-home-page-pages-292.php>; Image source: www.forbes.com, The Heidelberg Project in Detroit, Michigan

CASE STUDY: El Dorado Main Street

This community success is relevant to goals B, E, F and G.

El Dorado, Arkansas, is a 2009 Great America Main Street Award recipient. The city of 23,000 residents, once an oil rich boomtown, had become a ghost town by the late 1970s. A single downtown property owner catalyzed revitalization after attending a main street redevelopment conference and returning home with a powerful new vision for development. The city became an official Main Street community in 1987. Since then, El Dorado has built a thriving economy that attracts visitors and retains residents with its combination of more than 65 downtown specialty shops, year-round cultural and musical events, and vibrant night life. Once on the verge of extinction, El Dorado is now the pride of the entire south Arkansas region.

For more information: <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/main-street-news/2009/02/el-dorado.html#>; <http://www.mainstreeteldorado.org/>



E. Job Creation and Talent Development

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will improve regional economic performance by improving training opportunities, developing talent recruitment strategies, developing business-friendly communities with outstanding infrastructure, and devising targeted business recruitment strategies.

<p>Objective 1. Develop, implement and communicate a coordinated regional business development and recruitment strategy.</p>	<p>Action 1a. Identify resources and barriers for business recruitment and take specific steps to increase recruitment.</p> <p>Action 1b. Identify resources and barriers for increasing jobs at local businesses and take specific steps to increase jobs.</p> <p>Action 1c. Identify resources, incentives and barriers for local entrepreneurs, develop a system for measuring the number of businesses and employment levels regionwide over time, and take specific steps to increase local entrepreneurs.</p>
<p>Objective 2. Better develop, organize and align job training and job readiness programs for current Twin Counties residents to fill current and future jobs.</p>	<p>Action 2a. Establish a task force made up of Nash and Edgecombe County Turning Point Workforce Development Board members and a Division of Workforce Solutions representative to guide the action items.</p> <p>Action 2b. Verify benchmark data and establish success metric reporting and frequency.</p> <p>Action 2c. Pilot a workplace simulation center for “harder-to-employ” individuals.</p> <p>Action 2d. Survey Twin County region employers with regard to their hiring requirements to build a summary for the region and a breakdown by industry sector.</p> <p>Action 2e. Achieve certification of the Twin County Region as a Work Ready Community.</p> <p>Action 2f. Establish defined career pathways for job sectors with existing and projected opportunities and assure training programs are available to all Twin County residents (e.g. advanced manufacturing, allied healthcare, public safety, entrepreneurship, retail business, hospitality, financial services, etc.).</p> <p>Action 2g. Target marketing materials for available programs to identified unemployed and underemployed individuals.</p> <p>Action 2h. Actively support the STEP initiative in achieving its objectives to improve education outcomes.</p> <p>Action 2i. Identify and implement at least one new CTE academy partnership in each county annually that: starts in high school, progresses through higher education, earns industry certification(s) and links to Twin County employers.</p>
<p>Objective 3. Prioritize and align infrastructure and community development initiatives that are important for job creation and talent development.</p>	<p>Action 3. Identify and prioritize infrastructure investments that support job creation and talent development.</p>

F. Positive Image

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will promote a positive image of the area, internally and externally, by telling a new story that celebrates the assets and culture of the community, leverages the diverse array of present-day achievements, and articulates its aspirations for the future.

Objective 1. Develop a consistent brand identity for the Twin Counties Region.	Action 1. Develop a consistent brand identity for the Twin Counties Region.
Objective 2. Develop an internal, community-wide communications plan that raises awareness of our region's assets, positive work occurring in the region, resources and opportunities available to residents, and the coordinated external marketing campaign.	Action 2a. Inventory, consolidate and improve internal regional communications resources and share those resources with the public. Action 2b. Support training for frontline service workers to share the positives of the region with local customers and tourists. Action 2c. Encourage civic engagement and citizen leadership and study opportunities for more digital public engagement in community and governmental activities.
Objective 3. Coordinate an external marketing communications campaign that markets our region, including its natural and cultural heritage, to businesses, tourists and young people.	Action 3a. Analyze existing marketing campaigns, develop a strategy to coordinate resources and implement an external marketing campaign based on the regional brand. Action 3b. Proactively develop and promote positive stories from around the region in local, regional and national news sources.

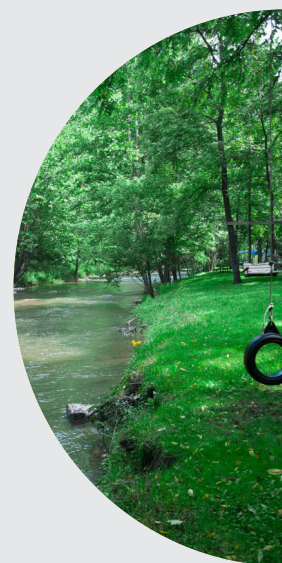
CASE STUDY: Clinch River Valley Initiative

This community success is relevant to goals A, D, E and F.

The Clinch River Valley Initiative is an ongoing effort to revive the historically coal-fueled economies of several towns in southwest Virginia through a multi-year planning effort aimed at harnessing the potential of the beautiful Clinch River as an asset for a recreation- and tourism-based economy. The project has two overarching goals: 1) retain the young people of the region by creating jobs and markets for entrepreneurs while increasing quality of life; and 2) attract visitors and new residents to the region. Working at the watershed scale, the project has already led to the development of goals, strategies and coalitions in several areas: downtown revitalization, outdoor recreation, water quality, entrepreneurship, and environmental education. As part of a larger effort to "re-brand" Appalachia, the Clinch River Valley Initiative connects to existing, already successful cultural heritage projects in the region. The initiative has been facilitated by the Institute for Environmental Negotiation at the University of Virginia.

For additional information:

<http://clinchriverva.com/>



G. Quality of Life in Underserved Neighborhoods

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will raise the quality of life in underserved communities through an equitable development approach that makes investments in the human, social, physical and economic capital of these communities and amplifies the efforts of existing community development programs and leaders.

Objective 1. Improve educational, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities which support development that benefits underserved neighborhoods.	Action 1a. Facilitate development of faith-based vocational programs that support housing rehabilitation. Action 1b. Support neighborhood rehabilitation, develop skills and create jobs. Action 1c. Support the Edgecombe County Business/Industrial Incubator in identifying funding to support entrepreneurs, franchisee development, financial literacy and planning, and microfinance for small businesses.
Objective 2. Invest in programs that support at-risk groups living in poverty.	Action 2a. Identify additional support needed for the leading local nonprofits and CDCs doing valuable community development work and seek additional funding from local businesses, philanthropic organizations, Rocky Mount, Edgecombe and Nash Counties, and other resources to support their current activities. Action 2b. Pursue innovative, nongovernmental sources of funding (such as crowdsourcing) to expand the efforts of local nonprofits and serve the growing need in the Twin Counties region. Action 2c. Create a network of community gardens and promote gardening to improve people's health, expand family income, address neighborhood blight, and strengthen community relationships.
Objective 3. Invest in infrastructure and community development.	Action 3a. Support and actively promote the adoption of a workforce housing bond in the City of Rocky Mount. Action 3b. Advocate for the development of a strategic neighborhood improvement plan to guide investments toward positive long-term outcomes for underserved neighborhoods and their residents.
Objective 4. Organize neighborhoods and build community pride in order to: (1) create a family-oriented atmosphere in these neighborhoods and (2) generate political will for addressing issues important to the neighborhood.	Action 4a. Build trust and create positive outlooks in underserved neighborhoods. Action 4b. Strengthen neighborhood associations and other networks to increase accountability in housing policy choices.
Objective 5. Address the intersection of race and poverty.	The group discussed this objective at length and decided to keep it on the table for now; race is significant factor in regional patterns of poverty. Actions may be developed at future meetings.

H. STEP: Improving Educational Opportunities

Goal

The Twin Counties Region will provide a high quality education system for all learners from cradle to career.

To tackle this goal in the near-term, the Coalition endorsed the work of the Strategic Twin Counties Education Partnership (STEP), which is bringing together leaders from across the Twin Counties Region to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. An additional action team independent of STEP may be added at a later date at the discretion of project leadership. The action plan below was developed by participants in the STEP process.

Objective 1. Creation of a culture that values education, the choices it enables, and the economic impact it promotes.	Action 1a. Establish current reality using data collection, analysis and application (trend and subgroup, etc.). Action 1b. Develop an ongoing process for communication and collaboration among all stakeholder groups interested in education. Action 1c. Engage families and communities in supporting educational processes.
Objective 2. Prioritize the opportunities to improve the current educational system.	Action 2a. Identify strengths and priorities for improvements. Action 2b. Identify high impact evidence-based strategies. Action 2c. Define progress measures. Action 2d. Align efforts around educational improvements and other visioning goals and action groups to optimize scarce resources.
Objective 3. Address educational priorities with evidence-based strategies and align efforts supporting economic development.	Action 3. Implement and evaluate strategies based on planning process above.

CASE STUDY: Meriden Family Zone

This community success is relevant to goals B, D, E and G.

In 2010, the Meriden Family Zone was formed in Meriden, Connecticut (population 50,000), in response to the inspiring successes of the Harlem Children's Zone. The project began by providing "wrap-around services" to 25 families (including 60 young children) in a distressed neighborhood targeted for support. During the first year, the project engaged an additional 80 families through neighborhood and school events. In 2011, Meriden received a Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant and is in the process of developing a more comprehensive plan to expand the service area. Meriden Family Zone aims to eventually develop a "cradle to college" continuum of child and family supports to improve the educational and developmental outcomes" in the targeted neighborhood.

For more information: <http://meridenfamilyzone.org/>



Looking Forward

Celebrating our Achievements

The *Twin Counties Vision and Strategic Plan* represents a tremendous achievement for our region. Edgecombe County, Nash County and the City of Rocky Mount have come together to forge a shared regional vision and commit to a set of collective actions to move toward that vision. This would not have been possible without the support of elected officials and staff from each of these jurisdictions as well as the dedication of the many volunteers who gave their time to recruit participants, engage in or facilitate study circle dialogues, refine the resulting vision and goals, and prioritize and implement many of the action ideas resulting from the study circle process.

From the beginning, the TCSVP process has recognized the direct connection between investing in our human capital and reaching the long-term goal of economic prosperity for all. With this in mind, the process has focused on empowering emerging community leaders to play a key role in the development and implementation of the *Strategic Plan*. The process has engaged and invested in an unprecedented number of citizen leaders, including:

- 23 citizen leaders who have served on the Community Partners Coalition.
- Over 360 community members who devoted a Saturday, lunch hours or several weeknights away from family and other obligations to offer their recommendations for how the Twin Counties Region can move forward in prosperity.
- Over 90 community members who completed training to become study circle facilitators.
- Over 70 community members who joined Action Groups to prioritize action ideas and shepherd implementation of the *Strategic Plan*.

Project Milestones

Fall 2011:

Town Hall Forum

Winter 2011:

Framing the issues

Spring 2012:

Community outreach

Summer 2012:

Study circles

Fall 2012:

Develop vision

Winter 2012:

Form action groups

Spring 2013:

Strategic planning

Summer 2013:

Final plan

Building on Success

The TCVSP process has emphasized the empowerment of engaged citizen leaders to drive both the planning process and implementation of the *Strategic Plan*. With the support of the Core Team, the eight Action Groups formed through the TCSVP process are prepared to drive implementation in their respective areas of interest.

By starting small and setting achievable near-term goals, each group will work to build momentum for positive regional change. Action Groups will engage in an ongoing, cyclical process of planning, action and reflection, and will regularly evaluate their progress in moving toward the regional goals outlined in the *Strategic Plan*. They will also coordinate regularly with the Core Team and fellow Action Groups to ensure that the efforts of each group complement one another.

Moving Forward Together

While the Action Groups are responsible for shepherding implementation of the *Twin County Vision and Strategic Plan*, implementation is not their responsibility alone. The Action Groups will be reaching out to many community partners to assist with next steps, including elected officials, government staff, businesses, civic organizations, churches and citizen leaders. Successful implementation will require the continued commitment and collaboration of all of our diverse communities as we move together toward a prosperous and secure future.



Acknowledgements

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Special thanks to the Community Partners Coalition, named on page two, for providing direction and oversight over the course of this project.



Core Team Leadership

Special thanks to the Core Team for their guidance in developing this report:

Ann Wall, Assistant City Manager, Rocky Mount

Brian Hassell, Planning, Inspections, & E-911 Director, Edgecombe County

Eric Evans, Assistant County Manager, Edgecombe County

John Gessaman, President, Carolina Gateways Partnership

Ken Graves, Planning and Development Interim Director, Rocky Mount

Lea Henry, Community Development Administrator, Rocky Mount

Nancy Nixon, Planning Director, Nash County

Ola Pittman, Planning Director, Edgecombe County

Peter Varney, Assistant City Manager, Rocky Mount

Rosemary Dorsey, Assistant County Manager, Nash County

Shearin Johnson, Interim Chief Operating Officer, Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce

Theresa Pinto, President, Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce

Sue Perry-Cole, President, North Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations

Action Group Leadership

Special thanks to the Action Group Chairs and Core Team Leads for their leadership of each group:

Align Regional Leadership

Donald Boswell, Chair | Nancy Nixon, Core Team Lead

Crime Prevention and Safety

Robert Evans, Chair | Ann Wall, Core Team Lead

Food Economy

Sue Perry-Cole, Chair | Shoneca Kent, Core Team Lead

Health and Mental Health

Reuben Blackwell, Chair | Eric Evans, Core Team Lead

Job Creation and Talent Development

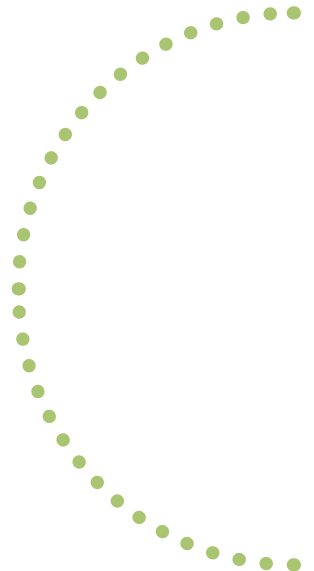
Johnny Bass and Mike Hancock, Chairs | John Gessaman, Core Team Lead

Positive Image

Dorsey Tobias and Don Williams, Chairs | Theresa Pinto, Core Team Lead

Quality of Life in Underserved Neighborhoods

Joyce Dickens, Chair | Lea Henry, Core Team Lead



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